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# A Note of Comment on Mark Twain. ❀

By The Editor.



IT will not be long before the real Mark Twain will be distinguished from the fictitious celebrity created by the truly wonderful advertising skill of his publishers. Indeed in the ability he displayed in adapting himself to the advertising campaign so perfectly planned and carried out by them, there was more genius than shown in any of his writings for many years. His literary output long ago ceased to be spontaneous, yet he was always kept prominently before the public.

By those who understand how such things are accomplished the process was watched with interest. If he appeared in a suit of white clothes, if a banquet to celebrate his birthday was given—by his publishers—the newspaper accounts of such happenings promptly were followed by advertisements of his complete works. To the initiated the connection was a trifle too apparent to be accidental. “Mark Twain

wants to see his books in every home"—as if that were not a long felt want of every author! Even his act of sterling honesty in discharging a large amount of indebtedness, which he probably could have avoided under cover of the law, lost something of its merit in the frequency of its telling. One hesitates to say this, but is it not a fact?

He was a kindly man and, when at his best, a straightout fun maker. Some one who, as a young girl, was a guest at his house in Hartford, recalls taking part there in a "Mother Goose" party. It fell to him to introduce the characters, which he did by reciting the verses and commenting on them. When it came to Little Boy Blue, he said:—

" 'Little boy blue,  
Come blow your horn;  
The sheep's in the meadow,  
The cow's in the corn.'

" 'The cow's in the corn.' Now that sounds strange doesn't it? You'd expect the corn to be in the cow, wouldn't you?" This was clever for the occasion and worth putting down as an actual occurrence that probably has not gotten into print before.



THE LOTUS It also is a fair example of his humor, which was direct and obvious, and entirely lacked the refinement and subtlety characteristic of really great humor.

Offensive in the sense of conveying a double entendre, Mark Twain never was in any of his writings. But I am reminded of "Punch's" story of the little girl, who ran to her mother, exclaiming, "Oh, mother, Willie said 'damn'! Isn't it wicked?" "It's worse than wicked," replied the mother severely. "It's vulgar." And, not to use so strong a word as vulgar, there seems to me in Mark Twain's work a strain of the unrefined, that is incompatible with the rank sought to be assigned him.

That an historic seat of learning, like Oxford, should have bestowed upon him the degree of Doctor of Letters, I consider funnier than anything he ever wrote; and, at the same time it is rather humiliating to American literature, that, if that university wanted to honor an American author, it could find none other. Better not to have bestowed the degree at all. It is not a compliment to this country to imply that its best contemporary literary output consists of humor with a nasal twang to it.